

There is indeed a blessed relief in such glimpses of the countryside and its creatures, even with sermons appended to peacocks' tails. But such moments are brief. The mists of melancholy soon settle again on Malvern Hills, and the endless procession of grey vapours resumes its march across the world of William Langland.

II

There remains something appealing about this sodden clayland, with its sadly dripping coverts, where Piers Plowman drives his furrow. We have a sense that this is, after all, the England of our ancestry; just as our memories of the neighbourhood where we passed our own childhood, even if sometimes tinged with dislike, keep a certain persistent and clinging vitality of their own. Yet, after an hour or two of mediaeval Malvern, I always find myself longing for a bluer, harder sky and lands less widowed of the sun. There comes back to me, though dim and blurred like a face not seen since long ago, the ridge of Helicon, as it rose to southward, though too far : aside to reach, when I walked from Delphi to Lebadeia. I had spent two nights sleeping among wood-shavings on the first floor of a half-built house in Arachova, vainly hoping for the mists to lift from Parnassus. I had eaten my hard-boiled eggs at that parting of the ways where Oedipus, coming too from Delphi, once met and killed his father. And I can still recall that glen

leading up into
the heart of Helicon, and the mixture of
relief and yet
regret with-which I turned past it, along the
track towards
Lebadeia and the railway for Athens. After
three weeks
alone in the mountains of Northern Greece
the longing
to hear English speech again had grown too
intense; and
the sole of my right boot ended an inch short
of die toe.
And yet, just as intensely, here in these wet
green wastes